

February 17, 2009

Ned Ellis
Mapleleaf Farm
768 Gilead Street
Hebron, CT 06248

TO: Members of the Environment Committee,

My name is Ned Ellis. My family has farmed in Hebron since the early 1700's. At Mapleleaf Farm we milk 230 cows, have 200 head of young-stock and are stewards of over 450 acres of cropland.

As one of the 150 remaining dairy farmers left in our beautiful state I am deeply concerned about our survival because of the extremely low price for milk both now and predicted throughout the coming year. In 2008 our milk price averaged \$18.69/cwt, which is lower then our cost of production. Currently our price for February milk will be \$11.62.cwt and for 2009 it is projected to be \$13.48/cwt. **WE CANNOT SURVIVE THESE LOW LEVELS,** these are to 1970 prices.

Keeping the dairy industry viable is crucial in maintaining working farmland in the state. Not only does farmland provide tourists and state residents views and vistas, and recreational opportunities for hunters, bikers, joggers, painters and such, but it also provides for wildlife habitat as building devour their living space.

Dairy farms provide children with education that can't be duplicated in a classroom. Each year hundreds of school kids and adults visit our farm and learn that milk comes not from a carton, but from real cows! They can milk a cow, feed a calf, see the feed and equipment and experience a working farm.

Keeping dairy farms in Connecticut is good for the infrastructure of all agriculture in Connecticut. By giving needed economic support to businesses such as feed companies, equipment dealers, fertilizer suppliers, and mechanics. When farms are profitable they infuse \$1 billion dollars in to our economy and provide thousands of jobs, as shown in a 2009 study by UCONN.

Thousands of acres of growing crops transform carbon dioxide into fresh air. This same cropland absorbs and filters the rain that falls and replenishes our vital aquifers. As feed prices escalate and reliance on imported food prices increases, we become more aware of the importance of a local fresh food supply. Can a dollar value be put on sustaining healthy communities that support a green local economy?

By investing in our future you are investing in our economic potential.

Connecticut farmers are not able to impact the factors which caused the crisis in 2006 and again now in 2009. USDA sets our milk price and does not recognize conditions we face here in the Northeast. Dairy farmers

here in Connecticut are trying to devise a mechanism to deal with another disastrous collapse here. We must act **NOW** to develop a long-term plan for sustainability and a permanent structure that will distribute funds to Connecticut dairy farms when the price of milk falls below the cost of production.

It is important that we get bipartisan support to deal with financial challenges facing the dairy industry before it's too late. We know the price we receive for our milk will fluctuate widely. We need a "safety net" in place to prevent these precipitous swings. **Please invest in Connecticut's future and ours by supporting House Bill 5272 and House Bill 5478.**

Keeping dairy farms in Connecticut has many benefits to the state, many of which are hard to put a dollar value on. You can rebuild cities over and over, but once a working farm goes out of business, it is gone forever!

We are not crying wolf!
No more land is being made!!

Thank You,



Ned Ellis
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